

THE QURANIC CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

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ABSTRACT:

We are living in a globalised world, with diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds. All these suggest the importance for a better understanding one another through interfaith partnership. The prime objective of Quranic message is to create mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance to work in unity for peace and prosperity of humanity without harming the identity of any religious group in multi-culture societies. It is believed that every religion has some universalized values as a common ground. Islam is the first voice in the world which sent an invitation for universal brotherhood and unity. The Quranic vision of peace is not limited to the borders of the particular country or the confines of its own followers or community, it embraced all of humanity. Love and respect for entire humanity is the basic tenets of Islam. Islam makes all mankind one great brotherhood and exhorts all of us to seek the path of peace through the righteousness and beneficence of our conduct towards each other. The aim of this paper is to examine the Quranic vision of world peace and universal brotherhood as exemplified in the life of the Prophet of Islam who is the supreme exemplar in Islamic tradition. This paper will explore the ability of Quranic teachings to overcome the inter-religious conflicts in various parts of the world so that creative peace can be established on the earth.

Keywords: Quran, Islam, Humanity, Mutual respect, Universal brotherhood

INTRODUCTION:

With the rapid pace of the means of communication, the modern world has been reduced to a global village and a global community. There is an increasing intermingling of diverse economic, cultural and religious ideologies. The watertight compartmentalization of religious, cultural, racial and linguistic identities are fast breaking up giving way to a multiracial, multilingual, multi-regional and multi-religious grouping. But in spite of the positive aspect of globalization, many problems related to caste, colour, creed, sex and languages are cropping up and hamper global unity and brotherhood. To put an end to this ill and enmity and to establish peace and brotherhood in society, the Holy Quran is the invaluable gift for entire humanity. The holy Quran gives the message of universal brotherhood and puts the interest of others above self. The Quran aims at putting an end to fanaticism, casteism and racialism by preaching the unique lesson of the presence of God in all. It eliminates hatred. The Holy Quran lays stress on equality, brotherhood and mutual co-operation: The Quran did not accept discrimination among people on the basis of caste, colour, and sex and tried to present a unique principle of oneness of God and man. Based on human equality, fraternity coexistence, Brotherhood, love, respect, and tolerance, this oneness has been clarified in the farewell address of the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ on the occasion of the Hajjatul- Wida that is most authentic manifesto of the universal brotherhood of human being. He said; “your lives and property

are sacred and inviolable one to another until you appear before your lord.”¹ The Quran and traditions of Prophet Mohammad ﷺ are replete with instructions and injunction against sectional tendencies among human being.

THE HOLY QURAN:

The Holy Quran is the word of God as it was revealed to the Messenger of God, Prophet Mohammad (PBHU). It is the final chapter of the earlier Holy Books. This final message is the Criterion, the Guideline to differentiate between light and darkness and right and wrong. It is a blueprint for a new *Nation under God*. The Quran is the final word of Allah revealed to humanity through Prophet Muhammad (PBHU). It was not meant to address the seventh century of Arab society, but to all human being, for all the times. Islam lays down the following rights for every human beings Muslim, Non-Muslim and man or woman on the base of humanity.

- The right of life: The right of life is guaranteed by Allah to human. The holy Quran lays down in this regard. The holy Quran says: “whoever kills a human being without any reason manslaughter or corruption on earth, it is though he had killed all mankind”.² In other verses, Quran Command “Do not kill souls which Allah has made sacred except to the due process of Allah”.³
- The right to the safety of life.
- Respect for chastity of woman.
- The right to justice.
- Equality of human being.
- Security of the property.
- Rights of freedom.
- Freedom of expression.

THE ISLAMIC VIEW OF HUMANITY:

Fundamental philosophy of Islam rings on universal humanity. Islam always encourages its followers to live with tolerance, harmony, love, brotherhood and peace on the earth adding that humanity is more precious than any of the religions. God has granted human dignity to all mankind. The Holy Quran says. “And indeed we have honored the children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea and We provide them with *At- Tayyibat* (good things) and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment”.⁴ It is narrated that a Jewish funeral passed before the Prophet ﷺ and he stood, some of his companions said it is a Jewish funeral. He replied: is not it a soul of human being? All humanity is a single body. This also means that all humankind is a family - brother and sisters, equal before God. Islam teaches us to harmonize our relation and adhere to the principle of peaceful co-existence of all human beings irrespective of their faiths, religions, and ideologies. It clearly emphasizes upon rationality in dialogue. The other people are to be revered and talked to in rational and responsible way to exchange the ideas. The Holy Quran has alluded to the unity and solidarity of human beings in their humanity and considers the saving of one life to be the same as saving all lives and to transgress one is to transgress all: “Who so slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption down on earth, shall be as if he had

slain mankind altogether; and who so gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether".⁵

EQUALITY AND BROTHERHOOD:

Liberty and equality are the two fundamental pillars of human rights recognized by classical democracy. Besides liberty in all its forms, equality constitutes the other scale in the balance of fundamental human rights. It merits a special mention because of its close relation to peace and the brotherhood of mankind. The principle of equality constitutes one of the sacred and prominent axioms of Islam. Islam considers that all mankind are equal before the law, in their rights as well as in their obligations, without any distinction of race, nationality, colour, family or creed. Piety alone is the measure of dignity in Islam. Islam sees all human beings as the creatures of God. All people are equal and enjoy the same degree of humanity. Equality between people should be regardless their race, colors, creeds, and cultures. God says, "It is He who has created you from a single person (Adam) and then He created from him his wife (Eve) in order to that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her".⁶ The difference of people is not to fight each other and override some of them over some, but to know each other, God said, "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other".⁷ In fact, Islam is a religion of blessings, kindness and tolerance for all humanity without any differentiation.

JUSTICE:

Justice is the most cherished ideal dream in every society. Justice is universal to every member of human family. That's why we find Justice is the central theme in the Quran. The Holy Quran is known as al- Furqan that means the differential sources between truth and injustice which tries to vindicate the evils to create justice in the society. Quran gives the noble ideas to harness a peaceful world order based on equality, respect, dignity of honor and justice. In the Islamic worldview, justice denotes placing things in their rightful place. It also means giving others equal treatment. In Islam, justice is also a moral virtue and an attribute of human personality. Justice is close to equality in the sense that it creates a state of equilibrium in the distribution of rights and duties, but they are not identical.

TOLERANCE:

Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. Peace can never be established without some form of tolerance. Tolerance and dialogue are two keys to provide peace and harmony in society. Tolerance means to accept coexistence and co-exist peacefully. Islam called for tolerance. God orders the believers to be patient at the time of anger and to excuse those who treat them badly. Dialogue increases the depth of every culture with the other cultures. With the continuing dialogue and the peaceful dealing, humans learn to reduce their prejudices and increase tolerance and correct their misconceptions. The Holy Quran is based on forgiveness, tolerance, and respect for entire humanity. Tolerance towards the people of other faiths always was one of the fundamental teachings of Islam. The Holy Quran says. "Let there be no compulsion in religion."⁸ A person who understands Islam and its teachings can never be a terrorist or extremist. Islam undoubtedly encourages humankind to cooperate on the basis of justice and a peaceful life and one of its most important principles is to promote peace.

FREEDOM:

Islam admits the freedom of thought, free expression of opinions, and exercise of independent judgment in religious matters. It also acknowledges tolerance among religions, religious communities, nations, and tribes, and commands mutual understanding and cooperation among all people, as we shall demonstrate with clear proof. The Islamic concept of freedom applies to all voluntary activities of man in all walks of life. Every man is born free on the *Fitrah* or in a pure state of nature. This means that man is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority and ancestral hindrance. Within the framework of Islamic concept of freedom, there is no room for religious persecution, class conflict or racial prejudice. The individual's right to freedom is as sacred as his right to live.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:

The Quran is indeed unique among the revealed scriptures in the world which refers not only to dialogue between followers different faiths but also to the divine ordainment of religious diversity. Islam identifies categorically with the people who possess the earlier revelations and promulgates that to each nation has been sent the Prophets. It said that God has sent around one lakh twenty-four thousand prophets unto earth at different periods of human history for formation. The basis of religious freedom in Islam is this Quranic assertion. There is no compulsion in religion.⁹ Islam regards religious diversity as one of the (*ayat*) sign of God. The Quran not only acknowledges religious diversity but also lays down the principles of interreligious relationship. It first calls for respect and protection of all places of worship.¹⁰ The Prophet himself applied this principle by allowing the delegation of the Christians of Njran to pray in his mosque. Religious freedom is not under attack in the Quran but is actually upheld by it. As the Holy Quran declares that there is no compulsion in religion. True guidance is now distinct from error.¹¹ There is number of similar verses in the Quran which makes it quite plain that one's choice of religion is wholly a matter of individually conscience. The diversity and differences in ethnic and human communities is normal and should be result in an understanding and cooperation among them. The Holy Quran indicates that the differentiation, within mankind in respect of gender, tribe and race is also a source of knowledge. The Holy Quran clearly prohibited any kind of coercion or compulsion in conveying the message of religion: "No compulsion is there in religion; verily truth has become clear from error".¹² The Holy Quran has emphasized, time and again, the diversity of religions and God's judgment concerning them: "To you your religion and to me my religion".¹³

MUTUAL RESPECT:

Islam teaches us to respect every man who is good whatever his religion may be and to be drawn towards merits and virtues whatever be the religion or race of the person who possesses them. All human beings were creatures of God. The Holy Quran emphasizes that all the people have right to follow the religion of their own choice. In Islam, all human beings are brothers and sisters unto each other. Islam calls on people of different faiths to have mutual respect for each other on the basis of their common humanity while following their own religion. According to Islam, the life of human being is a trust from God, irrespective of his or her ancestry, colour, or language. Humankind is the best of all creations¹⁴ and is created of the best stature. So, every human deserves respect by nature.

QURANIC THEORY FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE:

Islam brought to the world the message of peaceful coexistence, not only in theory but also in practice. The truth is that Islam is a peaceful way of life: it was so for the man of past and it is so for the man of today. Human beings are to coexist in peace and harmony, diversity and differences in faith were to be judged by God. The Quranic concept of peaceful co-existence is the view that human beings are united under one God.¹⁵ They are to strive towards virtuous deeds¹⁶ for most noble person in the eyes of God is the one who is most pious.¹⁷ These and other verses command Muslims to build bridges of understanding and cooperation with fellow human beings in order to create a just social order. Peaceful co-existence requires that people abstain from abusing and denigrating those who do not share their beliefs. Deriding and mocking others can engender violence and hatred. Therefore, the Quran urges respect for the beliefs of others. The Quran further states, "Had God willed, they would not have been for not idolaters and, we have not appointed you a watcher over them, neither are you their guardian. Abuse not those to who they pray, apart from God, otherwise, they will abuse God in revenge without knowledge. So, we have decked out fair to every community their deeds: then to their lord they shall return, and He will tell them what they have been doing."¹⁸

THE PRINCIPLE OF BROTHERHOOD IN ISLAM:

Islam is the first voice in the world sent an invitation for universal brotherhood and unity. Muslims have to believe in all prophets¹⁹ including Moses, Jesus and all the books sent by the God including Torah (*Al-Torah*) and Gospel (*Al-Injil*). Adam A.S. is, therefore, not just the first man, but also the first Prophet, the first to receive words from God. The guidance promised by God. The universality of this guidance in Quran is very clearly stressed for every community *Ummah* there is a messenger²⁰ As Muslims, we accept all prophets and Books sent to different peoples throughout the history and regard belief in them as an essential principle of being Muslims. A Muslim is a true follower of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and all other Prophets. (Peace be upon them). Not believing in one Prophet or Book means one is not a Muslim. Thus, we acknowledge the oneness and basic unity of religion which is symphony of God's blessings and mercy and the universality of belief in religion. So Islam is a system of belief that embraces all races and all beliefs. It is a road that brings everyone together in brotherhood. The Quranic concept of universal brotherhood of mankind is also evident from the fact that the word "Muslim" has come only 42 times in the Quran, whereas the word "mankind" came 240 times and the word "man" came 65 times.²¹ This clearly shows that welfare of the whole mankind is one of the principal concerns of Islam.

CONCLUSION:

Islam created a vision for the humanity from the Divine book of Quran and appealed for universal brotherhood that is common in respect of humanity. The Holy Quran provides a framework of social equality and universal brotherhood. This framework produces a flexible social structure which motivates an individual to grow on the basis of efficiency and good character. It introduces social equality among human beings irrespective of colour, race, and geography. These features promote beneficial cooperation and mutual sharing of resources. Its strength and stability depends on the strength and good quality of individual bricks. Similarly, world peace is unthinkable without the spiritual and psychological peace of a large majority of its inhabitants. Islam unites all human beings

in love and sympathy as brothers. The brotherhood of Islam transcends all geographical and political barriers. Even the strictly religious obligations of Islam, like the congregational Prayers, Fasting, Zakah and Pilgrimage to Mecca have the additional function of creating brotherly feelings and equality among all sections of humanity. On the basis of the equality of all men, and of religious cooperation and tolerance, Islam has emphasized the religious brotherhood of all believers on the one hand and the human fraternity of all people on the other. Muslims all over the world are considered one single community, whose pillar is religious solidarity and the spiritual brotherhood which the Holy Quran has so strongly emphasized: the believers are indeed brother".²² This universality is confirmed by the Holy Quran and the prophetic traditions. The message of Islam is not confined to the Arab race, nor to a particular nation; it is a universal message addressed to all men. Islam has unambiguously declared the equality of all men without discriminating between them with regard to religion, nationality, race, colour and lineage. This is one of the consequences of the unity of mankind which binds them all and the unity of universal justice which organizes all their relations.

References:

¹ Sarwar Hafiz Ghulam: Mohammad: The Holy Prophet Lahore-1949, P. 409

² Quran, 5:32

³ Ibid, 6:151

⁴ Quran :Surah Isra,70

⁵ Quran 5:32

⁶ Quran, al- A'raaf: 89

⁷ Quran, Surah, Hujrat,13

⁸ Quran, 2:256

⁹ Ibid, 2:256

¹⁰ Ibid, 22:40

¹¹ Quran, 2:256

¹² Quran 2:255

¹³ Quran 109:5

¹⁴ Quran, 95:04

¹⁵ Quran, 2:213

¹⁶ Quran, 5:48

¹⁷ Quran, 49:13

¹⁸ Quran, 6:107,108

¹⁹ Quran, 3:84

²⁰ Quran, 10:4

²¹ Abdul Ali, Insight into Islamic Humanism, p 183

²² Quran 49:10